

- Draft for Discussion Purposes Only -

A Narrative Vision

Miami Gardens in Five to Ten Years

City of Miami Gardens, Florida
March 2005

Introduction

In early 2005 the City undertook a process to develop a consensus vision for the newly formed City of Miami Gardens. The Vision would provide direction for the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP). Utilizing its most valued and renewing resource, a representative group of almost 40 citizens and community leaders, including the Mayor and City Council, residents, business owners, and representatives of key organizations and agencies, each person filled out a “baseline” questionnaire and then was interviewed for their best ideas. A summary of responses to the questionnaire is included as well as interview highlights.

After compiling responses, a futuristic vision of the city in 5 to 10 years began to take shape. While the vision does not specify exact dates, these general time frames coincide with the Comprehensive Development Master Plan timeframes. What would the City be like when the dreams, ideas and projects expressed by its citizens are realized? To the greatest extent possible, the words, expressions and ideas of these citizens and leaders are directly quoted in the below scenario of the not-to-distant future of Miami Gardens.



Building on our name: Miami Gardens

- **Miami** – “Miami” identifies the City’s location as being in South Florida. Emphasize the name Miami Gardens to be synonymous as central in the Miami-Dade/Broward area with excellent access.
- **Gardens** – Strive to have lush foliage, a city of gardens. Encourage many types of gardens -- religious, tea, vegetable, tropical, cactus, rock, etc.
- **Facelift** - Expanding upon “gardens” as a theme, promote awareness of an environmentally conscientious city. Continue community involvement in planting, working the earth with the City’s Keep Miami Gardens Beautiful Program (KMGB).

- **Tree-lined Streets** – Maintain dense foliage in order to contribute to the “garden” look desired by the community. Ensure commitment to tree-lined streets via proper irrigation and maintenance.

Creating a Sense of Place

When it was founded in 2003, Miami Gardens had very little sense of place or character. It was a typical bedroom community built in the “60’s. Immediately, the City implemented the Keep Miami Gardens Beautiful program which included several key grants for streetscape and landscape of major streets. Awards to homeowners and businesses recognized outstanding landscape and maintenance and instilled a sense of pride that spread throughout the City. A new City Seal was developed and placed on attractive highway entrance features that now identify the City’s gateways. The City’s leaders identified nodes, corridors and activity areas within the City that were emphasized for mixed uses, especially retail commercial. Transit Oriented Development and Highway Corridor Overlay Design Guidelines provided the basis, with a healthy economy, to revitalize the area’s major highways. The result is a clean and attractive environment known for lush, tree-lined streets and rising property values. The ongoing and massive beautification effort has given the City a facelift. Abandoned cars and debris along the roadways are things of the past.

The Dolphins Stadium and Calder Race Track have provided great opportunities to



sell Miami Gardens and identify where we are. Miami Gardens has become a central location, both to and from the City, due to excellent highway access as well as significant transit. We serve as a gateway to Broward County. We take pride in being known as a working middle class/blue collar community. However, we have a growing base of professional, white collar workers.

Insuring Quality Development and Redevelopment

The City seeks balanced development, both commercial services and residential development. With over 150,000 people, we have sufficient services in close proximity to residents; this minimizes traffic. We got tired of driving to better restaurants and movies. With careful planning and proactive marketing, the City attracted new facilities to our town in the form of recreational and entertainment venues.

Town Center and NW 27th Avenue. Shortly after becoming a City, two Super WalMarts revitalized convenient and high quality shopping in Miami Gardens. At first, many residents and business people were skeptical that the community could support two super stores. The WalMart at Dolphin Stadium has spurred redevelopment of the once-derelect Carol City Shopping Center site into Miami Gardens Square, a mixed use commercial and residential project with condominiums, townhouses, restaurants and shops. The Miami Gardens Square project is based on New Urbanism and Transit Oriented Development. The North Rail Extension of Miami Dade’s MetroRail has been integrated into the redevelopment of the area.

In the northeast quadrant of this new “town center” at the 27th and 183rd crossroads, a modern civic complex emerged integrating City Hall, the Police Station, the Library and a new Civic Center. The City’s recreation plans showed the need for a venue for civic activities where social groups could meet. There were no banquet halls or similar indoor facilities in the City for special events. Now the Civic Center and its adjacent civic spaces provide a pedestrian oriented environment for art shows and civic ceremonies.



While the 3 to 6 story buildings in this area are higher than the surrounding single family neighborhoods, the area still retains a “small town” feel which includes lush landscaped streets, brick pavers in the streetscape, modern street lighting and recessed building setbacks from adjacent homes.

Early on the City realized that in order to have quality development, a complete array of services was needed. Parts of 27th Avenue were not served by sanitary sewer. Central sewer services have been provided through federal grant funding

implemented through the City’s Community Development Block Grant program.

State Road 7. The US 441/SR 7/2nd Avenue Corridor is now a revitalized business area with premium transit and redeveloped



commercial centers. After completing the State Road 7 Livable Community Master Plan in

2005/6, the City implemented special corridor design standards and coordinated county, state and regional transportation providers. The City plays an active intergovernmental role on the SR 7 – U.S. 441 Collaborative sponsored by the South Florida Regional Planning Council. The Golden Glades WalMart Superstore spurred additional commercial redevelopment of the entire corridor. Several new townhouse developments attracted new residents; an upscale condominium project is under construction. In addition, drainage problems have been corrected through implementation of the City’s Stormwater Master Plan plus federal grant programs and FDOT funding.

Enhancing Traffic Circulation and Public Transportation

The City integrated Transit Oriented Development (TOD) into its Comprehensive Master Development Plan for the MetroRail Extension up NW 27th Avenue. Successful implementation of TOD standards helped Miami-Dade County justify and ultimately secure funding for the North MetroRail Extension. The four planned transit stations have been built and the NW

27th Avenue Corridor has become a nationally recognized example of TOD standards, especially the Miami Gardens Square and Center City Complex at NW 183rd. Careful planning insures that pedestrians and vehicles coexist. A City Circulator connects the nodes with other activity areas and neighborhoods. These efforts and programs have helped the City come closer to its ultimate dream, a City without cars.

The Circulator provides free service to the large and growing elderly population. Frequency of transit service has also increased with better connections to workplaces. For example, college students can now easily connect from TriRail at Golden Glades to St. Thomas University and Florida Memorial University.

The Dolphins Stadium

The Dolphins Stadium has expanded into a family entertainment/tourist attraction complex that has been integrated into the City's vision; a waterway amusement complex includes retail and commercial uses that have become a popular destination for both residents and visitors. The stadium picks up its fair share of contributions to the community and has become a significant "economic engine" for the area. Renovations have turned the stadium into a year-round venue for conventions as well as sport events. A hotel plus parking garages enhance the project's mixed use character.



Calder Race Track



Calder Race Track has continued to be a venue for gambling and entertainment. The complex's excellent accessibility from the Turnpike and MetroRail keeps significant traffic off the City's local streets.

The Palmetto Expressway/SR 826

Representing the City's most visible commercial/industrial corridor, the Keep Miami Gardens Beautiful landscape improvements to the right-of-way and interchanges have given an upscale feel to the area. The Sunshine State International Park has a waiting list of prospective tenants. The Palmetto Lakes Industrial Park continues to experience redevelopment and renovations.

Build High Quality Housing

Stability. One of the City's assets has always been its neighborhood stability. At its heart, Miami Gardens is a



residential community. Many homeowners have paid off their homes and have permanent roots in the City. New developments have been upscale single family executive

homes as well as quality townhomes and condominiums with attractive amenities. Long waiting lists are common for residential developments in Miami Gardens.

Homeowners Associations. Through its community development block grant program, the City assisted in the reactivation of several defunct property owners associations. While a difficult process, reactivation has revitalized several developments and turned substandard, deteriorated housing into standard neighborhoods.

Attainable Housing. The City has more than its share of affordable housing and does not need additional affordable housing. A county study confirmed this. Some now use the term “attainable housing” to describe affordable housing.

Elderly. In 2006 the City of Miami Gardens became an Entitlement Community in terms of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. We’ve utilized our CDBG program to assist our elderly population that needs help in maintaining their residences. This effort has been coordinated with our Youth Council and has created many new relationships. Many other housing and neighborhood related programs have been implemented with the CDBG program.

Section 8 and Other Rental Housing. There was a perception that there were too many Section 8 rental housing units in Miami Gardens and that the residents of Section 8 housing created problems in neighborhoods because they do not properly maintain their housing. This perception has been countered by housing administrators who note that many

allegedly Section 8 units are not subsidized and are simply private rental units. However, historically, Miami Gardens has received many families who were displaced by Hurricane Andrew as well as the Hope VI projects to the south. The City implements a Rental Housing Code that provides for systematic inspections and licensing aimed at insuring good upkeep. This program has been successfully implemented by the City’s Code Enforcement Department and utilizes an annual inspection process that insures that each unit is up to code.

Porches. Regarding residential uses, parking should be in the back with porches in front. This provides for an information gathering place for neighbors and friends.

Implement Quality Design Standards

Miami Modern Architecture Rediscovered. Much of Miami



Gardens was built during the post World War II era of the 50’s and 60’s. Many prominent buildings were designed in a diverse architectural style now known as Miami Modern or

“MiMo.” These usually high quality, modernistic, often flamboyant structures have been rediscovered. The Arch leading into the Sunshine State International Park provides a most dramatic example. The Park itself



exhibits the most significant grouping of MiMo industrial architecture in existence. Many, many residences as well as commercial and religious buildings exhibit MiMo-style fenestration and design elements. The City has embraced this architectural identity. Residents see their homes and businesses in a new light. The City has encouraged retention of significant MiMo structures. Many new buildings have adopted similar though updated elements of the MiMo style. The result is groupings of interesting, somewhat retro and eclectic structures that are establishing an exciting, innovative new identity for the City.

Strip Commercial. In general, many of the City's commercial strip centers have been cleaned up. Numerous commercial corners have been enhanced with landscape. Many corners that lacked landscape have been beautified with corner planters and other amenities. The City has enforced many original plans for development to insure compliance with all conditions, especially landscape. Often the City has assisted financially in restoring and enhancing business facades, especially through the use of CDBG funds.

Color Palette. The City established standards for building color in order to prevent incompatible and tasteless facade treatments. Neighborhoods look better when there is a coordinated and compatible color palette. Notwithstanding an overall color palette, a diversity of color remains a prominent feature of the City.

Signage. Freestanding signage was eliminated in favor of monument signs coordinated with building architecture.

Marquis are now uniform on strip malls. Old marquis are now complying with a height limit because they were not "grandfathered in." Shopping centers are limited to one directory per center. Unsightly display of multiple US flags is not longer allowed on commercial sites.

Landscape Standards. The City decided that it was not enough to just require lots of landscape. In addition to high quality trees and shrubs, the City's Comprehensive Streetscape Plan for major roadways includes a palette of amenities that includes lighting, sidewalks, pavers, signage, street furniture and similar features. These high quality features have been incorporated into the City's new form-based land development code.



More than Tree-Lined Streets. The City embarked upon a systematic street landscaping and streetscape plan. This prioritized

list targets each major street, the type of landscape/trees, pavers, street lights, signage, anticipated costs and anticipated installation. All green spaces are irrigated. The City utilizes a portion of its share of the ½ cent sales tax to accomplish this program.

Street Lights. When the City was established, many of the street lights were covered with trees. The lamps were old and worn out. Most of the old lighting has been replaced in accordance with the City's streetscape plan. Conflicts with trees and street lights have been corrected.

Waterways. The City capitalizes on its waterways. In addition to the water-oriented commercial development at the stadium, an attractive Greenway along Snake Creek (Canal 9) is popular among bicyclists and joggers.

Emphasizing Schools and Education

All agree that schools in Miami Gardens have turned around. The two 40+-year-old high schools are both rebuilt as modern educational campuses. The Miami Gardens Charter School is under construction. Partnering with corporate sponsors has further encouraged support of the schools. City government plays an active role and lobbies the School Board to take the student/classroom ratio formula seriously. The City carefully reviews each new development for impact on schools.

An “Education Zone” has been established for Florida Memorial University, St. Thomas University and the area adjacent to the two schools. The collegiate atmosphere in this area strengthens the educational institutions and creates synergy towards a higher level of advanced education. Many Miami Gardens residents attend these schools. Additionally, laboratory schools from elementary through high school have been established at the universities to the benefit of new teachers as well as local primary grade students.

Develop and Redevelopment State-of-the-Art Recreation Facilities and Services

Upon incorporation the City inherited sixteen neighborhood and community parks with facilities that were in deplorable condition. Virtually all of these facilities have been rehabilitated, expanded or otherwise developed into a state of the art system that provides the venue for an award-winning year-round recreation program. The City recently purchased a 100-plus acre regional park site that will bring to fruition the City’s goal to reserve major green space.

Emphasize Cultural Diversity

We won’t forget the reason that we incorporated in 2003. That effort required involvement and we strive to involve and inform our citizenry. Working with St. Thomas University, Florida Memorial University and the Miami Dade School System, we have established the Miami Gardens Youth Council which provides leadership opportunities for young people from K through 12. This and other similar efforts have proven beneficial to involving and providing direction for our youth.

Miami Gardens is the heart of Black Miami. For many years however, the older black areas of Liberty City and Overtown continue to receive funding resources out of proportion to their significance. That has changed in large part through the City of Miami Garden’s political leadership.

Churches. Churches continue to provide an important and essential function in the community. However, the City recognizes that churches often occupy strategically located properties that should be reserved for economic development activities. The City discourages the location or expansion of churches on properties that should be utilized for commercial and industrial uses.

Hispanics. The City's Hispanic population has unique needs, especially regarding recent immigrants. Hispanics vote in high numbers. While the majority of residents are Afro-American, the City promotes the image of a multi-ethnic community in order to promote inclusiveness.

Seniors. The City utilizes a "senior center" approach for elderly senior citizens. They now have a place to go that is also coordinated with youth activities.

Special Events. Annual activities and special events such as the Martin Luther King Day Celebration, Miami Gardens Community Day and the Christmas Caroling Celebration have brought the community together. Such events help develop a positive identity for the community and continue to be encouraged.

Safety Always

Safety is paramount. It follows that a better way of living allows people to be out and not be afraid. Businesses also need safety to succeed. While most of our City has been safe



for many years, several neighborhoods have had to overcome an image of crime. For example, the Carol City area had a tough street image. Through redevelopment and a police force solely dedicated to serving City residents and businesses, our neighborhoods and commercial/industrial areas are now considered safe.

In some cases, incorporation meant residents had to relearn protocols, especially regarding police procedures. There was even a false perception by some that there were fewer officers within the city limits. While it is true that certain familiar officers were no longer present in certain neighborhoods, the City takes pride in its independent police force.

Conclusion

The progress envisioned in the above scenario provides direction based on commitment and determination generated by the founders and leaders of the City. At the end of the day, this is what the community wants to see. The Comprehensive Development Master Plan provides a key opportunity to articulate the vision. The direction for the CDMP's plan elements should be driven by this vision. The CDMP's goals, objectives and policies must lead to the development of high quality public and private amenities as well as the provision of excellent services articulated in the vision. Additional visioning or strategic planning processes should be accomplished every few years in order to assess progress, adjust emphasis and simply reaffirm the vision. Consistent with the City of Miami Gardens' motto, "Striving to the best," the City's vision must be kept alive and dynamic.

No.	ORGANIZATION	PARTICIPANT
1	Mayor	Shirley Gibson
2	Councilman	Aaron Campbell
3	Councilman	Melvin L. Bratton
4	Councilman	Oscar Braynon II
5	Councilwoman	Audrey King
6	Councilwoman	Sharon Pritchett
7	Councilwoman	Barbara Watson
8	Andover Lakes East HOA	Marlene Arribas
9	Andover Lakes West HOA	Ernest Roberts
10	Citizens Advisory Committee	Patricia Lightfoot
11	Lake Lucerne Beautification	Louise Ogden
12	North County Citizens Assn. Inc.	Lillie Q. Odom
13	Universal Truth CDC	Anthony Reed
14	Antioch MB Church of Carol City	Arthur Jackson III
15	First Baptist Church of Bunche Park	Alexander Bostic, Jr.
16	Mt. Hermon AME Church	Henry Green
17	Resident	Dyatha Colebrook
18	Resident	Larry Thomas
19	Resident	James Ashe
20	Compunet	Alvin Smith
21	Dolphin Stadium	Eric Knowles

22	North Dade Chamber of Commerce	Ken Gress
No.	ORGANIZATION	PARTICIPANT
23	Office of Congressman Kendrick Meek	Anthony Williams
24	City of Miami Gardens Charter Committee	Alfonso K Brewster
25	Vista Verde Miramar Gardens Homeowners	Nathaniel Miller
26	Pentecostal Tabernacle Crime Watch	Marjorie Specicher
27	Isla Joyeria / Aspira Florida (Youth Group)	Raul Martinez
28	Northgate Realty/Southgate Mortgage Company	Ned Carter
29	Leslie Estates #7	Sylvia Daughtrey
30	Educator	Rondalier Sims
31	Former County Commissioner District 1	Betty Ferguson
32	Foster Construction	Dexter Foster
33	St. Thomas Univ.	Father Edward Blackwell
34	Florida Memorial College (Office of the President)	Dr. Albert E. Smith
35	Miami Carol City Sr. High	Albert Payne
36	Miami Gardens Plaza LTD Partnership	Alec Blotnick
37	Warren Henry Automobiles (Attn: Brenda Lee)	Warren H. Zinn
38	Napolitano Commercial Property	Mark Napolitano
39	Webb Commercial Realty	Bill Webb Jr.